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AUTHOR	Holtschneider, Dennis H.; Morey, Melanie M.
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ABSTRACT

A decline in the number of members of congregations or orders working at Catholic colleges and universities has left lay people as the primary stewards of Catholic higher education. A restructuring that began in the late 1960s established formalized, shared-governance relationships in which most congregations turned over ownership of colleges to lay-controlled boards of trustees. Now, a new wave of shared governance is sweeping these institutions, which enroll 670,000 students at 230 institutions. According to Relationships Revisited, a survey of presidents and congregation heads of all U.S. Catholic colleges, most institutions have revised their governance structures in recent years to respond to a diminishing ability to fill faculty and administrative positions with committed members of the sponsoring congregations, whose numbers have steadily decreased. To soften the impact of the loss of sisters, priests, and brothers working on campus, these new structures are designed to perpetuate the congregation's involvement in major collegiate decisions. Increasingly, the influence once provided by large numbers of religious permeating all aspects of campus life is giving way to governance controls exercised by congregational leadership. Current efforts to retain congregational involvement in governance are inadequate, given the seriousness of the congregational decline. (SM)

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OCCASIONAL PAPER

Relationship Revisited: Catholic Institutions and Their Founding Congregations

By Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M. and Melanie M. Morey

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Forty years ago, Catholic colleges and universities were owned, operated, and staffed in great numbers by their founding religious congregations. These included Benedictines, Franciscans, Congregations of the Holy Cross, Vincentians, Jesuits, Dominicans, Sisters of Mercy, and many others. The same religious congregations that staffed these institutions also contributed their services gratis, thus providing a living endowment of tremendous worth.

Today, few members of congregations are serving in these institutions. The living endowment of their contributed services is greatly diminished on some campuses and has all but disappeared on most. The culture that their presence fostered is at risk. Lay people, once secondary supporters in these academic ministries, are increasingly involved in all levels of service, teaching, leadership, and governance, and they are fast becoming the primary stewards of Catholic higher education.

From their early history until the mid-1960s, most Catholic colleges and universities operated as ministerial arms of the religious congregations that founded them and were structured accordingly. Most colleges had no separate civil incorporation but shared the civil incorporation of their religious congregations. This pattern of structural relationship gave way in the late 1960s when most Catholic colleges sought to restructure their statutes and bylaws, changing themselves into organizations independent from, yet structurally related to, the religious congregations that founded them. The colleges wrote bylaws and statutes that allowed the religious congregation to maintain a specific membership percentage on the board; at the same time, most congregations turned over

***Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M.**, is executive vice president and chief operating officer of Niagara University in Niagara Falls, N.Y.*

***Melanie M. Morey** is a senior associate at Leadership and Legacy Associates in Belmont, Mass.*

ownership of the colleges to lay-controlled boards of trustees. Congregation-controlled governance gave way to structures of shared governance with new lay-trustee partners.

The precise details of the formalized governance relationships that developed in the late 1960s varied considerably, but once such relationships were established they remained relatively stable—until now. As the results of our survey demonstrate, a new wave of change has begun that carries profound implications for the approximately 230 Catholic colleges and universities that educate more than 670,000 students in the United States each year. These shifts are most apparent in a widespread renegotiation of the roles, responsibilities, attitudes, and most particularly, governance structures that shape college sponsorship.

Defining Sponsorship. Religious congregations of men or women founded the majority of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Today, as many as 88 percent of Catholic higher education institutions in the United States still derive their relationship to ecclesiastical authority from their founding, sponsoring bodies. These Roman Catholic religious congregations consist of men and women—sisters, brothers, and priests—whose vowed lives of poverty, obedience, and celibacy free them to serve the Church in full-time ministry. Their vowed lives also serve to provide witness to a God-centered life commitment for the benefit of the whole Church.

In the United States, religious congregations have created and staffed a powerful network of educational, health-care, and social-service institutions designed to serve Catholics and any others in need. Together, these institutions represent the largest single nonprofit institutional presence in the nation. Given the breadth and depth of the services that religious congregations continue to provide, the extent to which they have remained decentralized is remarkable.

Numerous congregations of modest size take it upon themselves to sponsor a handful of institutions that operate independently from those sponsored by other congregations. Individual congregations maintain their connection with these institutions through relationships comprising varying degrees of influence and control called "sponsorship."

Commonly used, the term "sponsorship" has no official status in either civil or canon law. It refers to the overarching roles, responsi-

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bilities, and influence of congregations over the institutions they have founded. From the outset, the term has meant different things to different people. Sponsorship can refer to religious congregations that staff all of a college's principal positions and maintain power over its major decisions. Sponsorship also can describe congregations that own a college's buildings and property but no longer maintain an active role or public presence at the institution.

The colleges experience the sponsorship relationship in three ways: through the influence of the members of the congregation present at the college, through the congregation's structural governance control, and through the commingling of resources.

Influence of Role Models. Over the course of their history, congregations have most profoundly influenced institutional ministries through the lived witness of the men and women religious who served there. By telling the stories, histories, and traditions of the founders, and by living lives that model the values embedded within this history, congregation members exert a profound impact on the campus community. Religious women and men form personal relationships with faculty, staff, and students, and those personal relationships serve as the vehicle for the transmission of corporate values. Their public religious faith creates an atmosphere that encourages others to speak of their own beliefs and search for religious truth. Religious men and women serve as present-day examples of, and advocates for, the belief that rational discourse and the search for truth are enhanced by faith in God and are ennobled when joined to a commitment to service.

Along with speaking and teaching about the academic life well lived, the sisters, brothers, and priests influence the collegiate community by their very way of life. Public witness of a vowed life commitment to both God and the academic life encourages and supports others to unite faith, knowledge, and service. The religious serve as a core group in the heart of the institution, and their presence and activity nurture and sustain its religious culture.

Such wide influence depends on the presence and visibility of religious throughout the institution. A clear description of the "permeation model" of congregational influence appeared in 1969 in a statement from the members of the Society of Jesus at the College of the Holy Cross:

The Jesuit Community of Holy Cross College is the agency by which the Society of Jesus makes the College of the Holy Cross a Jesuit enterprise. It represents a commitment of the Society of Jesus's major resource—capable, professional manpower—concentrated into the service of the College of the Holy Cross in such positions and with such quality and energy of professional effort that the College will be recognizable in the character of its operation rather than in accidental characteristics of organization. The purpose is to influence a college which will be an outstanding witness to the commitment of the Church to the pursuit and dissemination of truth in all areas of human activity.

This ideal was stated in the late 1960s in an era when significant numbers of religious men and women still lived and worked on Catholic college campuses. This vision of congregational relationship and influence both assumes and depends on a significant number of congregation members being dispersed throughout the various faculties and administrative posts of the institution. Very effective in its day, this model of permeation set a standard for congregational involvement and influence that still influences how people in Catholic higher education measure the effectiveness of sponsorship. Unfortunately, the continued shrinking of the numbers of religious men and women on campuses makes this model impracticable.

Elements of Shared Governance. As part of the process of civil/legal separation, many

The religious serve as a core group in the heart of the institution, and their presence and activity nurture and sustain its religious culture.

How the "Relationship Revisited" Survey Was Conducted

Questionnaires for the "Relationship Revisited" survey were mailed in November 1998. All presidents of Catholic colleges in the United States that had been founded by religious congregations received one questionnaire. Heads of the sponsoring bodies for each of these colleges received a slightly different questionnaire. Follow-up mailings and phone calls were conducted in spring 1999 to those who had not responded to the first mailing.

The survey forms mailed to the respective parties requested overlapping data and information, including all bylaws, statutes, incorporating documents, contracts, and any other written materials that pertained to the sponsoring relationship. This redundancy was designed to provide information regardless of whether one or both parties chose to respond for a given institution. For some specific questions, the overlap pointed out areas of agreement or divergence between the perceptions of presidents and congregation heads. All were promised that no individual or institution would be mentioned by name in the findings.

By August 1999, 70 percent of presidents and 65 percent of congregation heads had responded to the survey. Taken together, these responses provide information that describes 172, or 85 percent, of the Catholic colleges sponsored by religious congregations in the United States. This rate of response is high, and it also is broadly representative of the full range of American Catholic higher education. An analysis of the Carnegie classification of the respondents mirrors the Carnegie classification pattern for all Catholic higher education in the United States.

The returned questionnaires and governance documents were hand-coded and then analyzed during fall 1999 using traditional qualitative methodologies for document analysis. The findings were presented throughout the winter months of 2000, both privately to experts in the field and publicly at two conferences in order to test assumptions, analyze findings, and refine conclusions.

Catholic colleges laicized their boards of trustees and began the steady process of more fully incorporating lay professionals into all aspects of college life. They amended long-standing governing documents to define the mutual roles and responsibilities of trustees and congregations.

These new governing documents normally included such controls for the sponsoring congregation as reserved powers, guaranteed congregational representation in governance, the claiming of certain key positions for sponsors, preferential hiring of congregational members, and reversionary clauses. By defining and circumscribing the scope and extent of sponsor authority, these provisions established the ground for mutuality between congregational and lay trustees in the governance of Catholic colleges and universities. These new structures were designed, however, to facilitate sharing power with the laity, not to pass the torch of authority and responsibility to them entirely.

Shared Resources. In addition to these structural controls and the previously mentioned influence of congregation members as role models, another tie that binds institutions to their sponsoring congregation is a pattern of resource sharing.

The most common resources that congregations share with colleges are free or reduced-cost labor through the contributed services of their members, financial donations to support scholarships and capital improvements, loans, and favorable rental agreements for land and buildings owned by the congregation. Colleges frequently provide free or subsidized housing for the religious, as well as salaries, benefits, tuition remission, and gratis use of college facilities and services. At times, these organizations pool insurance, purchasing, maintenance, and utilities expenses. They sometimes share land and buildings, and it is not unusual for the motherhouse and/or cemetery of the congregation to be located on the college's property or vice versa. A number of colleges freely use the congregation's church or chapel. Occasionally, the financial survival of one institution

depends upon the continued financial support of the other.

The details of these many arrangements vary widely from campus to campus and congregation to congregation. Some are delineated within formal contracts, statements, and agreements. Others are negotiated informally on a year-to-year basis or simply carried on as a matter of custom. These are very practical arrangements and frequently are taken for granted as components of the larger sponsorship relationship.

The authority of congregational sponsors goes beyond the shared resources, the civil and canonical structures, and even the number of members who work in the institution. The religious have a privileged place and authority in the colleges their order founded. The colleges were born of these organizations and were shaped in the values of their founders. The college operates in their name—a Benedictine college or a Franciscan college, for example—giving the members of the religious congregation the moral and canonical, if not civil/legal, right to interpret the founding charism and to hold the college accountable for how it implements that legacy in the present day.

The separate civil incorporation of congregations and their colleges is misleading in that it suggests a kind of tidy independence that masks their complex interrelatedness. Structures such as bylaws, governing documents, and sponsorship agreements are but tools designed to ensure that the college or university continues to be faithful to its founding mission and spirit. As currently designed, the many forms of sponsorship—influence, structure, and resource ties—exist to enable the sponsoring congregations to support the distinctive religious cultures of these institutions.

The "Relationship Revisited" Study. What we called the "Relationship Revisited" study emerged in response to a perceived pattern in Catholic higher education. Several universities and religious congregations recently have sought assistance in analyzing and recasting their formal governance structures. This request most often was part of a larger effort to reshape the relationship between congregations and the colleges they founded. This study was designed to determine whether the governance changes at these institutions were part of a larger trend. (The methodology of the study is described in the box on page 4.)

Most institutions have been unable to replace retiring religious faculty and administrators with younger religious for some time.

Five questions lie at the heart of this study:

- Are the sponsorship-governance relationships between religious congregations and their colleges changing?
- If so, how are these partner institutions adapting their relationships?
- How many are doing so?
- Why are these changes being made?
- What implications do these changes have for the future of Catholic higher education in the United States?

College presidents and congregational heads were the primary subjects of this study. These leaders are the primary participants in the processes that define and negotiate sponsorship. They name the legacy in public and describe the evolving relationships between college and congregation to all constituent bodies. These leaders also guide doubtful or fearful constituents as they address change within the college and the congregation. They are the most obvious bearers of institutional legacy, and they are most intimately knowledgeable about the terms under which the congregation and college relate to it.

Analysis of the data that emerged from the surveys indicates that a significant number of Catholic religious congregations and the colleges they founded are indeed restructuring their sponsorship relationships. Twenty percent of the colleges (35) reported that they had revised their governance structures within the past five years to implement new sponsorship arrangements. Fifty-six percent of the colleges (96) indicated that they either currently are revising these structures or intend to do so within the next year.

Overwhelmingly, the instigating factor for these changes was demographic shifts taking

place in religious congregations in the United States. Those in the vowed religious life in the United States are diminishing in number and through aging. In 1965, there were 214,932 religious in the United States. In 1999, that number had fallen to 105,833, according to the *Official Catholic Directory*. Currently, nearly 73 percent of vowed religious are above age 60, with only 3.5 percent below age 40, according to a U.S. Catholic Conference survey.

Ninety-eight percent of survey respondents indicated that colleges are experiencing organizational stresses because of the aging and contraction of the sponsoring body. These stresses include effects from the reduction of congregational witness and influence and the contracted scope of congregational control. Forty-eight colleges (28 percent) reported that within the next ten years virtually no founding religious would work on campus or serve on the institution's board of trustees. Six colleges reported that the religious will be gone within the next two to four years.

Most respondents indicated that this demographic shift is undercutting the sponsoring body's ability to fulfill its historical roles in institutional governance, influence, and resource allocation. Our survey shows that most institutions have been unable to replace retiring religious faculty and administrators with younger religious for some time. Congregation heads reported they now are having difficulty staffing even the highest profile position on campus, the presidency. In fact, fewer than half of the colleges (49 percent) employ presidents from the founding congregations, and 43 percent of the presidents at Catholic colleges and universities are either lay men or women. (Congregations of men choose male presidents 89 percent of the time, while congregations of women choose male presidents 52 percent of the time, surveys show.)

Providing representation on governing boards also is becoming problematic for founding congregations. Twelve percent of the congregation heads (20) volunteered that they are having difficulty staffing board positions reserved for congregation members. At the same time, six college presidents reported that their institutions have statutorily reduced the number of congregational members required on their boards.

Adaptations and Tiered Governance. Religious congregations and colleges are adapting old structures and developing new structures to soften the impact of the loss of the sisters, priests, and brothers on campuses. These new structures are not designed to replace the contribution made by the permeation of the religious throughout the colleges. Rather, they are designed to keep the congregation at least minimally involved in most major collegiate decisions. The influence once provided by large numbers of religious permeating all aspects of campus life is giving way to established controls exercised by congregational leadership seldom in evidence at the college. The power of lived witness is being supplanted by contractual commitment.

Some of adaptations modify structures of tiered governance. Currently, 48 percent of the Catholic colleges participating in our survey (77) operate with one-tier governance structures; 51 percent of the institutions (82) have two-tier structures, and 1 percent of the colleges (2) employ rare, albeit interesting, three-tier structures.

One-tier governance usually means that a specific percentage (ranging from one-quarter to one-third) of congregational representation is required on the board of trustees. This structure is intended to guarantee that the voice of the congregation is heard in all governance discussions and decision making. *Two-tier governance* systems, in contrast, usually mean that there is a board of trustees and an upper body consisting solely of congregation members. This structure gives the congregation control, through this upper body, over any issues reserved to them by statute.

Our study indicates some movement from one kind of governance structure to the other at Catholic colleges and universities, but only in one direction. No respondents reported their colleges changing from two-tier to one-tier structures. Seven colleges with one-tier governance models, however, reported changing to two-tier structures. Four of these institutions completed the process within the past five years. And all four did so to reserve certain decisions for the congregation. Three additional colleges reported they intended to add a second tier soon.

One congregation head explained the thinking behind such decisions: "Our congre-

gation is diminishing. It is easier to staff a two-tier board than one-quarter of a one-tier board." A second congregation head added: "It also makes the relationship clearer giving the congregation, not individual board members who happen to be board members of the corporation, the reserve powers."

Frequently, the upper tier consists of the leadership team of the religious congregation. This assists the congregation in staffing governance positions by consolidating the positions within a small congregational leadership group. It also ensures continual governance involvement for the lifetime of the congregation and provides a core of vowed members whose congregational roles ensure they represent the congregation as a whole and not just their own personal views. Some respondents reported that college governance by congregation leadership teams can be problematic, however, when those leaders have no training or background in higher education.

The *three-tiered governance* model, reported by just two colleges, was used as part of a merger with another congregation's college.

Increased Reserved Powers. More than 12.5 percent of the institutions that responded to this study (22) are giving the congregations additional statutorily reserved powers. These powers guarantee authority and control to congregations by "reserving" certain decisions solely to members of the religious community. These exceptions to shared governance most often are defined in institutional bylaws or incorporating documents. Currently, 72 percent of Catholic colleges assign reserved powers to the religious congregations.

Our survey identified 56 different kinds of congregationally reserved powers. Most commonly, they involve decisions relating to amendments to governing documents (69 percent), purchase or sale of property (67 percent), dissolution of the corporation (55 percent), mission and identity (53 percent), and merger/consolidation (50 percent). Frequently, congregations also reserve decisions on approval of debt (45 percent), the appointment or removal of trustees (44 percent), the appointment of the president (38 percent), approval of leases (31 percent), and approval of budgets (19 percent).

Less commonly, some congregations reserve the appointment of campus ministers, university counsels, deans, and board committee chairs. A particular college also might reserve decisions on approval of construction, audits, insurance, and the board's agenda. These less commonly claimed powers may blur the separation between the official bodies, thus leaving the congregation subject to greater liability.

The most glaring impediment to bloc-voting provisions is the presumption that congregation board members will vote as a bloc—something they seldom do.

Comments from respondents indicate that college presidents and congregation heads are not always of one mind about the efficacy of increasing these powers. Provincials (regional congregational authorities), looking for control in certain areas, are more inclined to favor increasing reserved powers. They speak of "increasing, adding, shoring up, or clarifying" reserved powers for two purposes. First, as their numbers decrease, they want to establish more control over specific areas of college life. Second, they want to make clear that reserved powers belong to the congregation and should be exercised by congregational leadership, not by a collection of independent congregational members. Presidents, on the other hand, eschew congregational control in favor of congregational influence. As a result, they recommend against the expansion of reserved powers and, at times, even suggest revoking them.

Bloc-Voting Provisions. Bylaws of the majority of Catholic colleges and universities require that a certain number or proportion of the board be members of the religious congregation. This guarantees that the voice and concerns of the religious are present at board

discussions. Thirteen percent of the institutions responding to this study (22) require that votes on particular issues have the approval of at least some of the religious on the board, regardless of the board's overall vote.

Some bylaws give the congregations power to impede selected decisions of the lay board they impose. These bloc-voting provisions are structured in several ways. One college, for example, requires that 25 percent of the board membership be members of the congregation, and then requires that 75 percent plus one approve any decisions regarding changes of mission and identity. Some institutions require that particular votes achieve the unanimous consent of the congregation members on board. In two monastic colleges, the boards require the unanimous consent of all members of the monastery itself.

Bloc-voting provisions are useful in theory, but in practice they face serious impediments. Most glaring is the presumption that the congregation board members will vote as a bloc, something they seldom do. Several provincial respondents commented that they want to move away from this model to one that more adequately represents the interests of the congregation leadership. Their desire to create structures that directly vest authority in the provincial leadership arises precisely because congregational board members, like their lay counterparts, tend to vote independently.

Sponsorship Contracts. Sponsorship contracts are documents established outside the provisions of the charter and bylaws that more fully define the relationship between the institution and congregation. These documents are not new. Several Jesuit institutions have long used this tool to delineate the respective duties of the province, the campus Jesuit community, and the college. Recently, however, other religious orders are adopting the same model in order to codify agreements in such areas as preferential hiring for congregation members, lay formation, residence and utility agreements for resident congregation members, shared land and building usage, pooled insurance, reserved positions, and any number of value-laden statements about the mission.

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents to this study (50) have signed sponsorship agreements with their founding religious congregations. One pattern these contracts follow resembles an accreditation model in which the religious congregation agrees to allow the college to use the congregational name ("Franciscan," for example) so long as the college meets certain criteria. These criteria range from institutional clarity around a college's Catholic and congregational identity to a requirement that the college offer financial aid to particular kinds of students. Generally, it is understood that the congregation periodically will assess the college's faithfulness to the terms of the agreement. Rarely, however, does the agreement indicate how often the assessment will take place, who conducts it, or whether there is an appeal if a negative judgment is rendered.

Sponsorship Officers. Increasingly, both colleges and congregations are creating positions within their organizations dedicated to overseeing mission, identity, and/or sponsorship. Thirty-four colleges (20 percent) reported hiring individuals to oversee the mission and congregational identity of the college. Generally, these positions are intended to ensure the full-time attention of a major administrator to these critical areas. Along with these responsibilities, mission officers at colleges with lay presidents or non-Catholic presidents also are expected to compensate for the noncongregational status of the president. At one such institution, the congregation member who works with the lay vice president for student life and congregational mission is termed the "congregational coach."

Collegiate "mission-effectiveness officers" most frequently are vice presidents with duties that, at times, also may include "planning" or "student affairs." There are other models. At one college, the director of mission reports to the campus minister, a situation that vexes the founding congregation. The members fear that low placement of this position on the organizational chart limits the likelihood that the whole college community will hear the congregation's voice. Even at colleges that maintain the vice-presidential rank for the mission-effectiveness officer, there is no guarantee that the position will enjoy institutional prominence. Frequently, the position operates on the periphery of the college, resulting in compartmentalization rather than

integration of mission concerns into daily senior-level academic or administrative decision making.

For their part, congregations are establishing "offices of sponsored ministries," staffed by "sponsorship officers/coordinators/directors" within the congregations themselves. Thirteen percent of congregations (17) reported hiring individuals or establishing committees to oversee the mission and congregational identity of their sponsored ministries. Thirteen of these were women's congregations, and four were men's.

The usefulness of sponsorship contracts and congregation-based sponsorship officers in enabling colleges to remain faithful to their distinctively Catholic and congregational cultures may be transitory.

These positions or offices are designed to elevate and focus attention on the charism of the congregation across all of its sponsored institutions in health care, social service, and education. Survey responses indicate that congregation-based structures provide a certain consistency for religious congregations that sponsor more than one large-scale institution. They assist congregational leaders who neither feel fully competent nor have the time to attend to issues of institutional mission. Offices of sponsored ministry may improve stability and consistency for colleges and the congregation's other institutional ministries. Congregational directors of sponsorship are not necessarily replaced at the time of each leadership election. Consequently, the work of the office is driven more by the long-term commitments of the congregation than by the particular ministerial agenda of any given administration.

Surprisingly, college presidents in the survey regularly failed to mention congregation-based mission-effectiveness officers, even though they were specifically asked about them. This silence hints that these mission-effectiveness offices may not be as influential within colleges as sponsors might hope.

The vast majority of sponsorship directors are congregational members. Two of the 17 congregations with such a position chose to hire lay people to fill it. One women's congregation has hired a layman with no firsthand knowledge of its institutions to direct this office and has assigned a sister assistant to work with him. While lay people might well be effective in these kinds of positions, the decision to reach outside the congregation to fill a position that oversees institutional congregational fidelity is, at least on the surface, curious. At a more profound level, this pattern could suggest the depth of the staffing crisis affecting women's religious congregations across the United States.

Many religious communities see the work of sponsorship as a new kind of apostolic ministry focused not on the work itself but on oversight. In this new understanding, the congregational emphasis shifts from doing apostolic work to shaping apostolic work done in one's name. In a sense, this is ministry one step removed.

Mission Corporations. In some instances, founding religious congregations are loosening their direct sponsorship with colleges. At least three large congregations are creating independently incorporated entities to oversee the institutional ministries carried out in the congregation's name. Once established, these new organizations will replace congregations as the direct sponsors of colleges, social service agencies, and health-care institutions. They also will mediate any affiliation between the institutions and their founding religious congregations. At present, provincials and their councils are the directors of these new mission corporations. Here is how one survey respondent described the corporation:

The university is an integral unit of "Congregational Services," because we are convinced of its value and its need for systemic sponsorship. This sponsorship corporation is developing its capability to become a public juridic person in the Church structure. Until such time as the Congregational Services' board of directors feels it is capable of assuming the role of sponsorship in the name of the Church, the provincial superior and council will continue to be "sponsors."

The direct leadership link between congregations and mission corporations could be short-lived, serving to provide a smooth transition to a new kind of lay responsibility. One congregation head wrote: "I envision in ten years that a new public juridic entity will be created to sponsor the college. The entity will be composed of lay members. The new entity will maintain its ecclesial relationship if approved by Roman or Diocesan authority."

Distancing of Congregations. All of the foregoing structural adaptations demonstrate the increasing distance of congregations from the daily life of the colleges and universities they founded. Structural mechanisms such as two-tier governance models, reserved powers, bloc-voting provisions, and mission corporations are designed for purposes of oversight and reaction to board or administrative initiatives. The powers most frequently granted to congregations in these structural situations are the power to approve and the power to veto a given initiative. The issues reserved for congregational control, such as sale of property and change of mission, are limited. Congregation members have final authority over some specifically defined issues but little overall influence. In practice, congregational members may have more influence than the structures provide, but this influence most likely is the result of the personal persuasiveness of given congregation members or the deference of lay trustees, and not of structurally granted authority.

The usefulness of sponsorship contracts and congregation-based sponsorship officers in enabling colleges to remain faithful to their distinctively Catholic and congregational cultures may be transitory. All of these governance structures depend on the involvement of at least some congregation members in the life of the college. Should the congregations disappear altogether or no longer be able to provide effective staffing for designated positions, these solutions will cease to be workable.

Reversing the Decline in the Religious. Survey respondents frequently mentioned specific efforts targeted at addressing the problem of decreasing numbers of congregational members involved in colleges and universities. Forty-one congregations are involved in attempts to increase the pool of religious available to serve at their colleges. The most notable of these plans attempt to increase vocational outreach.

Thirteen other congregation heads described strategies for actively encouraging their current membership to undertake doctoral study in preparation for university leadership roles. Eleven colleges are instituting preferential hiring practices for members of the founding congregation. Six others are recruiting new religious for their campuses from their founding international congregation's Third World provinces. Another six colleges reported plans to bolster congregational numbers by recruiting among other founding congregational provinces in the United States.

At some colleges, recruiting efforts resemble techniques more commonly associated with corporate raiding. Several colleges founded by one of the larger congregations have plans to actively recruit congregation members from each other's campuses. Toward this end, three of the colleges indicated that they were endowing floating faculty positions for congregation members only.

With the exception of plans to attract new vocations, however, all of these other efforts, no matter how enthusiastically pursued, have limitations. While they may increase the number of congregational members on a given campus, they do not increase the number of religious in aggregate. The most that can be said for these plans is they create a "personnel liquidity," of sorts, which enables religious to move more easily between and among provinces as the needs of specific colleges come to the fore.

Financial Ties That Bind. Part of the structural connection that continues to bind colleges to founding congregations is a set of intricate financial ties. The tie most frequently acknowledged by respondents to the study is the major cash donations congregations make to the colleges for varying purposes. Ninety-one percent of the institutions in the study (156) stated that congregations contributed regularly. Forty-one percent of responding college presidents (70) reported that the congregations were among their major donors. Scholarships are the primary focus of these donations, but congregations also support

capital campaigns, building construction, annual operating budgets, and specific programs that support Catholic and congregational identity.

A comparison of responses from provincials and presidents indicates these donations often are more significant to the donors than to the recipients. At a number of sites, the congregation head described a donation as "sizeable" when it was not even mentioned by the college president. The reason for the discrepancy in perceptions might be that the donation has greater impact on the congregation's budget than on the college's. In a number of cases, congregations mentioned gifts from as long as 20 years ago, noting a historical pattern of long-standing generosity. Presidents, however, generally listed only recent donations, and frequently only those given during their tenure.

Clearly, for some colleges, the financial ties that bind them to the congregation have become cumbersome and dangerous.

Contributed services also connect congregations to colleges. Thirty-five percent of the congregation heads (60) noted that some or all of their religious employees offer the college their services gratis or at a greatly reduced rate. This is a significant change from the 1960s, when nearly all colleges received this benefit. Even within the 60 colleges that continue this practice, the actual benefit to the college has been cut drastically as a result of the significantly diminished number of congregation members at each institution. Fourteen college presidents described difficulty managing their budgets as they progressively replace cost-free religious with lay employees. Six additional colleges indicated that they were beginning to pay the religious full salaries in response to requests from founding congregations that find themselves financially pressed, in many cases as a result of covering health benefits for their aging populations.

Joint connections to land and buildings often create complex organizational entanglements for colleges and congregations alike. Nineteen percent of the institutions (32) reported that the congregation owns the land on which the college sits. At 14 of these, the congregation leases the land back to the college. Sixteen percent of colleges (28) share ownership of college buildings with the congregation. Another 16 percent of the college presidents (28) reported providing housing for the congregation, and about two-thirds of these provide that housing gratis. Twenty percent of the institutions (33) share utility costs in varying arrangements. Maintenance agreements exist between colleges and congregations at 16 percent of the institutions (28), and some parties retain first right of refusal for the sale of the other's land.

Motherhouses and congregational cemeteries established on or near colleges create strong emotional ties between the two organizations. The central place in the life of the college of a provincial chapel or congregational church also deepens relational bonds. Other ties with less emotional overtones form an interesting mix of connecting forces. Some congregations pool insurance. Others provide ongoing contributions to the sisters' retirement fund. Some colleges and congregations share administrative services such as payroll, human resources, security, and information technology. One college provides legal services for the congregation. One congregation underwrites budgetary shortfalls at the college. Another underwrites campus ministry for the college.

In some cases, the ties that bind colleges and congregations can extend beyond the lives of the collegiate partners. Thirty-two percent of the colleges (55) operate with dissolution clauses that provide for property and assets to revert to the founding congregation should the college cease to exist. Congregations, however, do not make reciprocal arrangements. Only one congregation in the study made provisions for the college in its bylaws should the congregation cease to exist. The one-sided nature of these provisions jeopardizes colleges operating on land or in buildings owned by founding congregations. Without other established arrangements, in cases in which a local province or congregation ceases to exist, its property will not revert to the college, but rather to

the appropriate ecclesial authority. Colleges in these circumstances would find it necessary to renegotiate land and building use and other formerly shared resources with a new relational partner.

Quite a few respondents expressed interest in severing the financial bonds that unite colleges and founding congregations. When asked what in their mutual structural relationships they would change, 20 respondents indicated a desire to disentangle the two organizations. One president whose college is located on land owned by the sisters described the threat organizational entanglement means for his college. In this situation, the congregation is becoming increasingly focused on the medical needs of its aging members and is considering selling the land and buildings to support these expenses. To prevent its own closure, the college, of course, is eager to purchase the property from the sisters but knows the limits of its financial ability to compete in the present real estate market.

As the president wrote: "Space, building, and university wages are all in jeopardy because of the financial needs and obligations of the congregation. There are serious implications. The crisis prevents the college from doing effective, long-range planning because we don't own the university site."

Two congregations reported they also may need to sell their respective colleges to raise needed funds for the care of elderly sisters. Clearly, for some colleges, the financial ties that bind them to the congregation have become cumbersome and dangerous.

Attempts to disentangle nonfinancial ties between colleges and congregations require complex negotiations that call for great sensitivity. Shared or proximate connections such as chapels and churches, geographical space, historical buildings, and congregational cemeteries not only carry financial dimensions, they also come with nostalgic, emotional, and historically laden meanings and purposes. Relocating any part of a shared or proximate college/congregation complex can be deeply disruptive to both parties. Such moves can separate colleges from a part of their living history and tear congregations from their ministerial roots. As a result of this dislocation, new pressures come to bear on the relationship between the college and congregation.

Although some college presidents and congregation heads voiced a desire to sever their interorganizational ties, others said they appreciated them and worried that severing these ties could have an unintended deleterious effect on their relationships. In many situations, financial ties force colleges and congregations to connect, negotiate, and deal with each other on real-world problems on a regular basis. In the absence of such ties, it becomes easy for congregations and colleges to drift apart.

It is important to note, however, that the interaction between the parties necessitated by financial ties, not the ties themselves, serves to deepen the relationship between college and congregation. With that in mind, both parties might be better served by establishing alternative structures for fruitful interaction rather than preserving unwarranted financial ties.

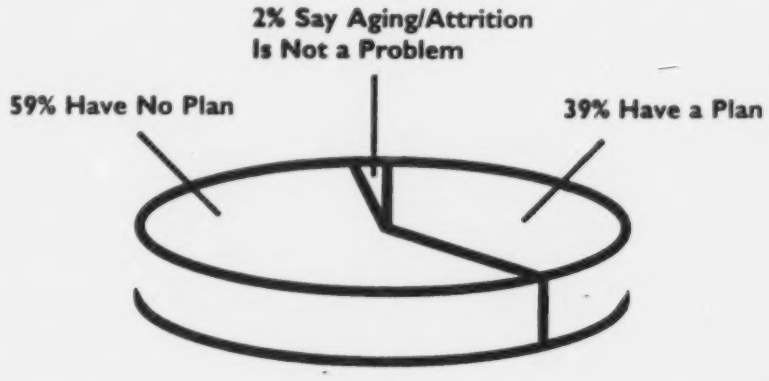
When Congregations Pass the Torch. With the aging and contraction of religious communities, several survey respondents wrote of plans they have made for the time when the religious congregation no longer will be able to play a role in the college's life. Three colleges currently are strengthening connections with the local bishop for an eventual handoff of the college to the local diocese. Five congregations explained that they formally intend to turn the college over to lay control, meaning that the congregation would sever all formal ties with the institution. Three others described formal succession plans to bring laity into roles traditionally held by congregations' members.

Thirty-eight colleges described efforts to acquaint faculty, staff, and board members with the history, values, and organizational culture of the disappearing religious community. At many of these institutions, the congregation funds at least a portion of these efforts. They include orientations for new board members and employees; tours of the motherhouse; visits to Assisi or other places associated with the particular charism; convocations; congregational award ceremonies; Founder's days; retreats; workshops; installation of religious and congregational artwork and symbols; mentoring programs that require meeting the old sisters as an opportunity to hear oral histories; endowed professorships in fields related to congregational mission or

identity; and "congregational identity" centers. Toward this end, several colleges report forming or joining consortia of colleges with similar charisms in order to undertake these initiatives jointly. Three such consortia were described, encompassing 52 colleges and universities.

Some respondents spoke of plans to focus their hiring on individuals who are most likely to embrace the religious charism of the congregation. Eight colleges specifically listed "mission-based hiring" as their strategy to replace disappearing religious. Two colleges reported that they intend to use their lay congregational associates to fill congregational board slots. One intends to hire its own alumni as a way of perpetuating and increasing the number of people on campus who are knowledgeable about and committed to the congregation's spirit.

How Catholic Colleges Are Responding to the Aging or Attrition of Religious



Too Little Planning. While the vast majority of institutions indicate the disappearance of congregation members is a problem, only 39 percent of the respondents report having a plan to deal with this situation. Another 59 percent of respondents report that they are experiencing the shortage but have no plans to address it, or were only studying the issue.

That so many congregation heads and presidents are able to identify the problem but have yet to develop plans to address it is curious indeed. Certainly, the disappearance of religious is not a new phenomenon. Commentators have been predicting it since the 1970s. The contribution of religious on campus is not an ill-prized legacy. In fact, respondents wrote regretfully of the loss of religious from the colleges and worried over the disappearance of congregational culture from the life of their institutions.

If the disappearance of religious is not a surprise, and their contribution to Catholic higher education is deeply valued, what is standing in the way of a meaningful response to this critical trend? Perhaps some of the paralysis is attributable to denial, but still other reasons emerged from the survey responses.

Some congregation heads and presidents cling to the language of the permeation model to describe their ideal of sponsorship. One president maintains that "the presence and involvement of congregation members in every area of university life is most significant and important." Another insists that "in order to preserve our identity, we need sisters to teach and administer here." These leaders seem unable or unwilling to imagine another kind of sponsorship structure and, as a result, still are wedded to a pattern of relationship that simply is no longer viable because it cannot be staffed effectively. Their focus on increasing congregational involvement impedes serious consideration of other structures designed specifically to address the eventual disappearance of sisters, brothers, and priests.

In other situations, the ties that bind colleges and congregations are complex and appear to interfere with imagining, let alone

implementing, new sponsorship structures. "The college's campus and buildings," according to one congregation head, "are connected to the Generalate since the College Ministry evolved into its mission and occupancy over the last 25 years. Because of the way the structures are laid out, it is probable that [college] dependence on the Generalate will continue for at least 20 years."

In some of these relationships, one organization cannot exist without the financial resources of the other. A president warned: "Space usage, building usage, and use of the university are all in jeopardy as a result of the needs of the religious congregation and their obligations to elderly sisters and young ministers of the congregation. Presently, the crisis of the founders is preventing the university from doing long-range planning. Our leasing rather than owning of the actual site of the university is at the heart of the trouble."

A number of leaders said it might be necessary to disentangle the two organizations. One president observed: "Centralization of power and congregational control of resources has tended to work to the advantage of the college in most respects. However, it has also created an overreliance that is potentially detrimental to the institution. The college should be the locus of primary decision making, creative efforts, outreach to potential supports, et cetera. While maintaining strong ties with our sponsoring body, we should move from an adolescent dependence to adult self-reliance."

Despite public rhetoric to the contrary, some respondents to this study expressed real doubt that laity can serve the mission and identity needs of Catholic colleges and universities as effectively as members of founding religious congregations. "Our sponsored institutions," a congregation head asserts, "look to the order to preserve congregational character through its presence and influence and by providing personnel and support."

Another wonders, "When the college is lacking in congregational presence, what influence will we have to ensure its mission?" In some institutions, the leadership states clearly that, without the congregation, the very identity of the institution will be compromised. One president wrote that without a strong congregational involvement, "the Catholic identity of the college will be deministered and the spirit of the founding congregation is in danger of being forgotten."

At other institutions, this less-than-wholehearted trust in the laity can be inferred by structures they are creating that continue to maximize the authority of diminishing numbers of increasingly distant religious at the expense of long-term and deeply committed laity who continue to serve the institution on site. These structures indicate, at least on an operational level, that serious doubt exists about how effectively laity can replicate the contributions of congregation members.

Some respondents simply admitted that their own confusion over how to proceed causes operational paralysis. One president said he is "watching, watching, watching." Another admitted, "Our overall planning and responsibility is still vague and uncertain. This confusion can also be seen in numerous, fuzzy 'wait-and-see' statements that were characterized as 'plans.'"

One college's leaders, for example, told us their "plan" was embodied in their call to "all members of the college community to identify the special nature of our education to our constituencies by means of the promotion of the college mission. The work of the five-member mission effectiveness team is ongoing. Currently, the team is asking the college community to explore the core value of "Vision," linking the past to the present to the future."

Consistently throughout the survey, respondents said they believed the magnitude of the problem had overwhelmed existing structures. One president explained: "There are fewer religious present. We need new paradigms or models for being present." For the majority of institutions, however, those new paradigms or models have neither been implemented nor, for the most part, even imagined.

Conflicts Between Institutions. Nearly one out of every three pairs of leaders (32 percent) disagreed about the future direction their sponsorship relationship should take. Some of these differences are stark. At one large university, the congregation head wishes to "formalize and concretize" the relationship with the college and is open to investigating new

models of sponsorship. The president, however, wants to study how best to hand the institution over to lay control.

At a Midwestern college whose land and buildings are owned by the congregation, the congregation head is investigating whether she has the authority to dissolve the college corporation. She rationalizes that the "congregation has invested millions on this property over the years, and we are now experiencing cash flow problems." The college's president seems oblivious to these congregational financial woes and writes about wanting greater financial support from the sponsor. The president also hopes to purchase the buildings the college uses at, no doubt, a price well below market value.

Many of the differences between the parties stem from financial concerns. Realizing that there will be few sisters left in the "very near future," one president of a small college wants to disentangle the college's budgetary issues from the congregation and phase out contributed services as part of a process of developing greater institutional independence. This president also is seeking greater collaboration with the diocese, looking toward the day when there will be no sisters at the college. The congregation head, on the other hand, responded that no change was necessary because there "are lots of wonderful sisters still involved in the college."

Generally, presidents prefer the sponsoring congregation to have less structural control. A congregation head from the Midwest wants to install two-tiered governance because "with decreasing numbers, it's easier to staff the top tier of a two-tier structure than a sizable percentage of a single board of trustees." The president of the college, however, stated that "no change in the relationship between college and sponsor is needed or desired."

At an inner-city college, sponsors want to increase their reserved powers to include approval of the budget, the auditor, and legal counsel. The president and the college's trustees are opposed to any such change and are stalling in the hopes of a congregational leadership change. At another institution, the sponsoring congregation head is satisfied with the present structure. The college president, on the other hand, wants to trim a two-tiered governance structure to a single board of trustees and convince the congregation to transfer the property deed to the college.

A few presidents and congregation heads admitted their differences, but for most, these disconnects remain unacknowledged. The congregation head of one sponsoring group said, "We have no power, except that the board chair has influence." Apparently comforted by this last vestige of influence, the sponsor seemed oblivious to how tenuous it might be. The president of the college was quite clear in stating that the college needed to get rid of the requirement that a congregation member be board chair.

The final arbiters of whether a particular congregation's spirituality is appropriate for laity will be, of course, the laity themselves.

Whether the president was a member of the congregation made no difference in the extent of differences between the president and congregation head. The president at one college, for example, who is a member of the congregation, wrote: "The province's inability to provide men will over time—five to ten years—dilute the congregation's presence and influence on campus. The congregation is not in a position to support the college in a major way fiscally. We need to lessen the number of congregation members on the board [from nine] to six." The congregation head responded that the congregation "want[s] to assume more control fiscally, academically, and spiritually."

What the Future Holds. Barring some dramatic providential act, the disappearance of priests, sisters, and brothers from Catholic colleges and universities will continue to its obvious conclusion, and Catholic higher education will exist without any significant involvement of religious congregations. This future without congregational sponsorship most likely will take one of three possible paths. Some colleges will become secular. A few may

find ways to protect the particularized spirit of the founding congregation. Most, however, are likely to become more universally Catholic. That is, they will shed the particular spirituality and culture that was characteristic of the founding congregation and adopt a more broadly based Catholic character. The likelihood of retaining a Catholic and/or congregational culture depends strongly on steps taken now by the colleges and congregations.

The possibility of secularization was mentioned by only four of the college leaders who responded to the survey, all of whom saw this as an undesirable but real possibility. Some institutions may sever the formal ties between the sponsor and the college, declaring complete organizational independence, as Daemon College in New York and Villa Julie College in Maryland have done in recent years. The more likely scenario, however, is that a number of congregations and colleges simply will drift further and further apart, eventually arriving at a point when the collegiate connection with the congregation is merely historical and nostalgic.

Among Catholic, congregational institutions, some respondents report the institution may retain a strong congregationally specific culture and spirituality well into the future. At such institutions, however, a memory of the founding religious will not be sufficient. The lay professionals who staff the college will need to internalize the spirituality and culture that was characteristic of the founding community. They also must become the bearers who nurture, sustain, and pass on the tradition. Therefore, the extent to which the congregation's charism is hospitable to the lay academic life will be an important factor in whether the transfer of this aspect of institutional culture is successful.

Religious traditions that are more amenable and consonant with lay experience will have an advantage. Colleges animated by such spiritualities may have an easier time maintaining their unique culture even when the religious are gone from the campus. The Franciscan charism, for example, has always been attractive to laity, and many lay organizations steeped in these traditions have developed and flourished. In most situations, however, creating a congregational culture sustainable by the laity will be more difficult. The final arbiters of whether a particular congregation's spirituality is appropriate for laity will be, of course, the laity themselves.

Among Catholic, noncongregational institutions, several respondents wrote that they are formally planning for their colleges to let go of their particular congregational subculture and to become more universally Catholic. One wrote: "We plan to remake the college into a canonically juridic person directly responsible to church authorities." Another explained: "We are working with the diocese to get them more involved. This is in response to the aging of the congregation."

In all likelihood, many if not most of the religiously sponsored colleges will become universally Catholic, not unlike Seton Hall in New Jersey or Carroll College in Montana. It is unlikely that the broad panoply of Catholic subcultures—Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Basilians, Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary, Xaverians, Apostles of the Sacred Heart, Dominican Sisters of Hope, Salesians, and many others—can continue without the presence of the religious themselves. In all probability, their spiritualities and particular cultures will last for only a generation after the final religious leave the institution. One college president's questionable strategy makes this point. "Our [congregational] charism is present and remains strong [in the college] due to the lived experience of our coworkers who have worked with congregational personnel over the years." The strategy of basing culture on the memory of a few, in our opinion, is a poor formula for keeping organizational culture vibrant and alive. A generation hence, the sisters and those who knew them will be gone, and the culture then will be based upon secondhand and thirdhand stories. Memory itself cannot sustain a culture.

For some colleges, the process of becoming more "universally Catholic" already has begun. Respondents frequently used broad, widely applicable language to describe their particular spiritualities. One institution's president described the college's congregational identity thus: "Our 'unique characteristics or attributes' are the following: (1) warm, personal friendships between priests and religious and lay faculty and staff; (2) exceptional quality of liturgical life on campus; (3) diversity among members of the religious communities work-

ing at the college; and (4) the education of the heart as well as the enlightening of the mind." Such characteristics are broadly Catholic. They could apply as easily to a diocesan-founded Catholic college as to a congregationally founded one. The use of such inclusive language will likely be furthered if the health-care industry's trend of mergers and strategic partnerships takes hold in higher education, as some predict. By merging, the subcultures of separate Catholic colleges will be forced to find common ground, a process that cannot but encourage a more universally based Catholic mission and spirituality.

spiritualities are not, generally, rooted in any particular spiritual subculture. The laity, by and large, embrace a universal Catholicism. Because the religious culture of the institutions will depend upon the laity, Catholic higher education itself must become more universally Catholic.

To tether a college to a particular spirituality may only weaken the college's chances of maintaining any religious character in the long term. Insisting on a religious subculture that the laity themselves do not embrace creates a battle plan without soldiers. A religious culture must be wholeheartedly embraced by those

Most Catholic colleges will likely shed the particular spirituality and culture that was characteristic of the founding congregation and adopt a more broadly based Catholic character.

Given the present context, most Catholic colleges may well adopt a more broad-based Catholicism to ensure the survival of their religious character. Few institutions will have lay people trained or willing to promote a particular spirituality that they themselves have not adopted for their own lives. Most college faculty, if Catholic at all, come from a variety of backgrounds and Catholic traditions. To the degree that they attended Catholic schools and colleges themselves, they quite likely encountered a number of different spiritualities and subcultures. Catholicism in all its variety—and not any one particular congregational expression of broader faith tradition—is the common experience that unites the diverse group of lay Catholics in higher education.

Catholic colleges may have a better chance of retaining the religious character of their institutions if they honor and organize around the spiritual experience of the laity. The specific subcultures of most religious congregations are sustained and nurtured by a particular expression of spirituality and mission formed and nurtured in a vow-based community. A comparable situation simply does not exist for lay Catholic faculty and staff in higher education, nor is creating one practical for most colleges. Most Catholic faculty seek their spiritual nourishment in diocesan-based Catholic parishes. Their

responsible for the institution's culture or it will not survive. Even so, the survey responses suggest that the idea that colleges may be well served by becoming more universally Catholic will be difficult for many religious congregations to consider. Congregation heads frequently expressed hopes that their respective congregations' spiritualities would be kept alive through the colleges they founded, even if the congregations themselves failed (or became) unable to continue the work of higher education.

Laity Will Determine the Future. In the final analysis, the laity will be the arbiters of whether congregational identity survives. In one president's words, "Ten years from now, we will be without brothers and will need to rely on a core of faculty and administrators who value and understand these traditions to make our identity a living rather than historical phenomenon." The vast majority of surveys indicate a desire for congregationally specific cultures and spiritualities to continue. Toward this end, they report a number of initiatives. Some are organizing workshops for new employees to teach the organizational culture. Others are organizing Founder's weeks, special Founder's awards, occasional conferences, or formal addresses that keep the congregation's values before the institution's attention. As laudable as these efforts are, they

are unlikely to prevent colleges from losing their congregational identities.

Organizational cultures—whether religious, athletic, or corporate—are kept vibrant by the energy of a core group within them who believe the organization's values in their hearts and who accept their role in motivating others to do the same. Workshops that acquaint employees with the traditions give information that helps them feel as though they are a part of the organization. Their efforts are not designed, however, to create coaches, cheerleaders, or disciples. Religious cultures are organizational cultures in the way they operate. It is not happenstance that novitiates are formation-based, rather than information-based experiences. It is not enough for a Jesuit to know the life history of St. Ignatius of Loyola. A Jesuit also needs a mentored experience steeped in the tradition's dedication to discernment. Jesuits need to find God in the work of scholarship and justice. Similarly, Franciscan simplicity of life is not learned in books but by trying simplicity for oneself.

The task ahead is enormous for colleges that wish to sustain a Catholic or congregational culture; it is far more difficult than the currently offered solutions imply. Until now, those cultures have been rooted in the presence of a core group of religious, whose lives, service, and structural governing powers shaped the institutions' identity and culture. If these institutions want a nonsecular future, they must construct serious and sustained formative experiences for the lay people who take over. They also must create an environment that disposes lay people to desire this end for themselves.

Spiritualities and religious cultures are not put on and taken off like clothes. People internalize spiritualities for entire lifetimes and change only under unusual and life-altering circumstances. With the exception of tenured faculty, higher education has a high turnover of staff, administrators, and increasingly, non-tenure-track faculty. It is unrealistic for colleges to rely on these people to embrace and then advocate a religious culture when their future in the institution is tenuous. Why, in fact, should these lay professionals make a life-altering philosophical and religious commitment if the college is not willing to make a commitment to them? Some nontenured faculty may have real connections to the mission, but these individuals more often are institutional transients. The ability to root a self-sustaining congregational culture at colleges and universities may well depend on the colleges' willingness to provide more stable job security among nontenured faculty and staff.

Tenured faculty are a more a stable community, but one cannot presume they are disposed toward sustaining institutional Catholic and congregational culture. In the late 1960s and the 1970s, with a core group of congregation members highly visible and involved in campus life, tenure-track faculty were recruited to bring the breadth and depth of diversity to campus life. Thirty years later, these same faculty still represent diverse intellectual and faith perspectives, but the counterbalancing core of religious on campus has all but disappeared. Today, tenured faculty are the ongoing and stable community in Catholic higher education. Nevertheless, because they were hired to enhance diversity rather than to sustain congregational Catholicity, they are less than likely to be key players in establishing a self-sustaining Catholic and congregational culture in colleges and universities.

The same difficulties hold true even if the college plans to jettison its congregational heritage but remain Catholic. A Catholic culture also requires a core group of witnesses at the center of the organization whose palpable beliefs make it possible for others in the organization to feel free to explore their own religious convictions. If the college desires a Catholic culture, then it must look to create that core group within the organization. Knowledge of Catholicism is not enough. Quiet conviction is not enough. (There are Catholics of strong religious conviction teaching in state colleges, and that does not make those colleges Catholic.) Only a core of visible believers, people whose faith is palpable, can leaven the culture of an organization. Any strategy to preserve these cultures and keep them vibrant over time must look to create and sustain this core. Otherwise, these institutions will become secular in all but name and history.

The largest loss Catholic colleges experience as congregation members disappear is the

loss of witness. The most critical question for the future of the unique cultural identity of most Catholic colleges in the United States, therefore, is how to create witnesses without religious congregations.

Governance Structures as Control Mechanisms. Perhaps the most disturbing finding of this study is the degree to which both colleges and congregations are changing their governance structures in order to solve a much larger problem. The loss of Catholic and congregational culture will not be stemmed by adding an additional tier to the governance structure, assigning additional reserve powers to congregations, creating sponsorship agreements, or creating offices and officers of mission identity in the congregations. The structures documented in this study will last only as long as the religious congregations themselves persist on campuses.

Congregations are disappearing and, paradoxically, are creating structures intended to give them greater control over the institutions they founded. As they continue to disappear, they will be less able to exercise the control structures to which they are now turning. One congregation head was quite clear: "You have to ask if you are in a position organizationally to properly assert control. If not, you shouldn't assert control." One congregation head spoke from experience: "I and my council don't have time for the college, so we send a representative." Other congregation heads saw such difficulties looming in the future. One wrote that in ten years "it may be difficult to exercise responsible sponsorship."

Some of the changing governance structures reported here enable congregations to remain involved in collegiate life but not in a manner that influences day-to-day operations. Broad influence has given over to narrow control. As religious disappear and serve merely on second-tier boards, as mission officers in a congregational office, or as parties on the other end of a sponsorship contract, their power is confined to control over specific major decisions. The students, staff, and faculty—whether in classrooms, offices, or campus gathering spaces—will not experience the religious or their lived witness firsthand. Survey respondents overwhelmingly reported a desire to continue congregational culture in the absence of the sponsoring group, but solutions that ration and optimize the few remaining religious are only stopgap measures and thus ultimately are doomed to fail.

The survey clearly suggests the major issue confronting Catholic colleges in this country is the possible loss of a congregation-based culture in the face of the disappearance of brothers, sisters, and priests. Any true solution to this problem must operate on the level of building and sustaining a vibrant culture without the direct involvement of religious congregations. The current effort to renegotiate and revise governance structures at Catholic colleges and universities is, at best, a stopgap measure, and at worst, a diversion from the real task at hand. ◆

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AGB recognizes its leadership responsibilities to members and to a diverse system of higher education. The association strongly believes in citizen control of our colleges and universities, rather than direct governmental control, and works to ensure that higher education remains a strong and vital national asset.

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- To promote wider understanding of and appreciation for citizen leadership and lay governance as the only effective ways to ensure the quality and independence of American higher education.
- To advance the philosophy that all elected or appointed trustees serve in the public trust and should consider themselves trustees of higher education as a whole.
- To strengthen the relationship between trustees and chief executives in the fulfillment of their distinct yet complementary responsibilities.
- To stimulate cooperation with public-policy makers, government agencies, and private organizations that have a stake in the effective governance and quality of colleges and universities.
- To identify and study emerging public-policy issues of concern to higher education by providing forums for their discussion and by encouraging appropriate member initiative.